

HOUSE BILL 2621

By Harris

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4;
Title 37 and Title 49, Chapter 6, relative to children
in foster care.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 6, is amended by adding
the following as a new part:

49-6-3801.

The general assembly acknowledges that students in foster care often face additional challenges, both academically and emotionally. When students are connected with a caring adult, attend school regularly, and have the needed support, students are more likely to be successful in school and in life. Schools, child welfare agencies, communities, and families shall work together to provide the equitable opportunities, specialized services, and useful support systems that are essential for students in foster care. By establishing a foster care liaison point of contact, the general assembly intends to further support coordination of resources and facilitation of compliance with state and federal laws related to students who are in foster care.

49-6-3802.

(a) Each LEA shall designate a foster care liaison to facilitate LEA compliance with state and federal laws related to students who are in foster care and to collaborate with the department of children's services to address educational barriers for students in foster care.

(b) The role and responsibilities of a foster care liaison may include:

(1) Coordinating with the department of children's services on the implementation of state and federal laws related to students who are in foster care;

(2) Coordinating with foster care education program staff at the department of education;

(3) Attending training and professional development opportunities to improve LEA implementation efforts;

(4) Serving as the primary contact person for representatives of the department of children's services;

(5) Facilitating immediate enrollment of a child placed in foster care in the appropriate school;

(6) Facilitating the transfer of school records when a child is placed in foster care and changes schools;

(7) Facilitating data sharing with child welfare agencies consistent with state and federal privacy laws and rules;

(8) Serving as a point of contact and resource to students in foster care;

(9) Ensuring that students in foster care are enrolled in and regularly attending school; and

(10) Providing professional development and training to school staff on state and federal laws related to students in foster care and the educational needs of students in foster care.

(c) An LEA may establish a building point of contact in each elementary school, middle school, and high school to assist in coordinating services and resources pursuant to subsection (b) for students in foster care. These points of contact must be appointed

by the superintendent of the LEA, in consultation with the school principal and the LEA foster care liaison.

(d) The LEA foster care liaison is responsible for training building points of contact.

(e) The department of education shall make best practices for choosing and training building points of contact available to each LEA.

SECTION 2. This act takes effect July 1, 2022, the public welfare requiring it.